



Apparel Care and the Environment

Alternative Technologies and Labeling



Summary of Discussion

Session I

Ohad Jehassi of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) opened the floor to questions.

Jack Weinberg of Greenpeace remarked that the Design for the Environment (DfE) Dry Cleaning Project has been a great success so far. He stated that the project had been very successful and should be highly lauded. On the other hand, it's far, far from complete. Mr. Weinberg closed by asking what the future holds for DfE and for the Dry Cleaning Project.

Dr. William H. Sanders of EPA responded by stating that what is happening with the program is the same as what's happening with lots of programs that are funded by the Environmental Technology Initiative out of Congress. What happened this fiscal year is that the money the agency received was reduced. The scope of work the Agency is allowed to do has also been reduced. The hope is that next fiscal year the money will be back up to where it has been in previous years. This year the DfE program didn't get full funding. Money out of the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics (OPPT) was used to help keep the DfE program going, because they recognize the value of the program.

Mr. Weinberg asked if it was reasonable to assume that the level of activity might not be the same, but that the Dry Cleaning Project would be going on for some time into the future.

Dr. Sanders replied that it is a priority at OPPT to make sure that it does continue on.

Manfred Wentz of the Fabricare Legislative and Regulatory Education Organization voiced his support for the DfE program. It is absolutely essential for the dry cleaning industry to be supported by somebody because the industry itself does not have sufficient funds to attack and resolve some of the larger issues. Dr. Wentz expressed his pleasure that the apparel care industry is making progress towards solving problems.

Ed Wituschek of Environment Canada asked if anyone had information on a human health risk assessment for petroleum solvents. If perchloroethylene (perc) is regulated in Canada petroleum solvents may increase.

Dr. Joseph Breen of EPA noted that the Cleaner Technologies Substitutes Assessment (CTSA) was moving forward.

Kaspar Hasenclever, Kreussler, Wiesbaden, Germany, provided a response to Mr. Wituschek's question. In metal cleaning and dry cleaning, hydrocarbon solvents are used in processes that have recycling, so that these solvents will not directly affect the workers. It was judged that the risks coming from hydrocarbon solvents in dry cleaning was low enough that you could negate them.



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Bill Seitz of the National Cleaners Association - International (NCA-I) corrected a statement made by Mr. Jehassi stating there were currently about 100 shops doing wet cleaning in the United States. There are approximately 36,000 dry cleaners in the United States. Probably 95 percent of those dry cleaners do a percentage of wet cleaning as part of their daily functions, because there are garments that require wet cleaning in addition to or instead of dry cleaning. Perhaps what Mr. Jehassi meant to say was that there are doing wet cleaning exclusively.

Mr. Jehassi clarified that he was referring to machine wet cleaning.

Mr. Seitz responded that there are different kinds of wet cleaning machines. Domestic washing machines are machines. Wet cleaning is not new to the dry cleaning industry.

Paula Smith from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management questioned Mr. Jehassi about the Small Business Administration (SBA) workshops being held concerning dry cleaning. She asked if the states were involved with these workshops.

Mr. Jehassi said that a number of the state programs have worked with the SBA small business development centers. Currently, EPA is simply designing the program, and have not yet decided what states will host the workshops. It depends on our funding.

Kay Villa of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute (ATMI) asked Dr. Breen to clarify an earlier comment. Near the end of your presentation he made a comment about finding environmentally-friendly cleaning systems. Alternative cleaning methods may require different techniques to produce textiles and these techniques may not be the most environmentally friendly way.

Dr. Breen responded that the point he was making was that rather than thinking of dry cleaning as an isolated piece of a process, it really should be thought of as part of an industrial ecological web. Those pieces of the puzzle are starting to come together and that sometimes when you look at those interconnections, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts in terms of the gains you can make.

Ms. Villa stressed that even though the textile industry may come out with fabric that can be cleaned using alternative processes that does not necessarily mean what we have done upstream in terms of the manufacturing of the fiber will necessarily be environmentally friendly.

Dr. Breen responded that Ms. Villa was correct and that those parts of the process need to be factored in to discussions about the environmental impact of apparel care.

Jodie Siegel of the University of Massachusetts - Lowell added that it is really important to look at everything in the entire life cycle of the textile and not just the cleaning because otherwise problems are created upstream.



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Jack Belusci of Global Technologies asked Mr. Jehassi what type of financial incentives were in place to help small cleaning establishments jump to the new technology. Global technology is working on carbon dioxide. Dry cleaners are very concerned about the financial bottom line and even though there are initiatives for new technology there doesn't seem to be a foundation either on the state or federal level for the tax incentives for additional labor that may be coming from wet cleaning or additional capital investments.

Mr. Jehassi said he was not aware of any federal programs that provide funding to help cleaners move over to safer technology. The state of California does have a program in place. It would be a good idea to engage the Small Business Administration to try to create that type of program.

Doug Kelly of Boewe-Permac added that the state of Minnesota is offering 3 or 4 percent loans for environmentally friendly projects for new business.

Ms. Smith said that Indiana has a \$200,000 available in challenge grants for states. Dry cleaners are included in that. Two applications came in this year for wet cleaning. One is the converting of the transfer machine to a wet cleaning machine. Funds are not available for equipment but funding for the education to run it and the training needed is available.

Eric Frumin of UNITE commented that it's good to know that in some places around the country the industry is looked at in realistic terms with regard to its ability to handle this transition but that in some places the sympathy just isn't there. Right now the industry is getting very little help. It really isn't getting any attention in most places where it really needs it.

Mr. Weinberg agreed that financial support for the transition to wet cleaning was a vital topic. He urged EPA to help facilitate some stakeholder process and hoped the wet cleaning partnership would be willing to participate as well. EPA should work with states or other agencies that have financial support programs and help them configure those programs so they can be of specific assistance to this industry.

Dr. Riggs expressed his support for what Ms. Villa and Ms. Siegel said with regard to the need to look at the upstream aspects, but believes the aspect of final disposal should also be looked at. Once clothing has served its useful life span in the hands of the consumer, how difficult is it to dispose of at that point. Looking at the chemistry from a very simplistic view, the more resistant the fibers and dyes are to damage from these various cleaning processes the more difficult they are going to be to dispose of at the end of the garments life.

Eric Frumin commented that within the European Community the green labeling issue provokes some discussion about the environmental hazards from fibers all the way through to disposal that incorporated some attention to working conditions in the different sectors of the industry.



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Dr. Kruessman built on Mr. Frumin's comment saying that eco labeling for textiles, at least in Europe is at a point where some important issues have been discussed. A lot of these issues, especially in terms of the life cycle of a textile, are very difficult to resolve.

Ms. Villa of ATMI was involved in developing a U.S. position policy statement on these eco standards. It's more of a trade issue than a true technical issue. These methods were developed without any testing to validate them. Don't look at them for any specific details to really clearly differentiate what is going on here.

Mr. Frumin clarified his comment, saying that Europeans have a very different perspective on what they would claim as a life cycle analysis. There are a lot of other technical difficulties in the way they describe what happens to the effluent downstream. They have a totally different method of water treatment, so it's really trying to compare apples and oranges.

Ms. Siegel attempted to sum up the comments, saying Eric is talking about the European care label and not the eco label. The Europeans are further ahead of us on developing care labeling for wet cleaning.

David Porter of Garment Care, Inc. commented that his main competitors are customers that clean their own clothes. He urged participants to keep in mind the economic ramifications of whatever environmental technologies come to the forefront.

Jenni Cho of the Korean Youth and Community Center in Los Angeles asked if EPA could possibly work with either Korean community groups or the Korean Dry Cleaning Associations.

Mr. Jehassi responded that EPA does work with the Korean Dry Cleaners Associations and would welcome any participation of any additional organizations.

Mr. Weinberg commented that the CTSA was supposed to be out in 1994. Since then, in terms of the technical issues addressed in Phase I, there has been little new research or development. The delay, on the part of the EPA, in publishing it has contributed to conflict between partners. Clearly there has been an area of on-going contention about just how toxic is perc? Is it not toxic? Is it a threat? Is it a risk? How do you characterize the risk? That's always been a division. There is a general agreement that there is an environmental and health concern but beyond that, the characterization has always been a matter of some disagreement. The inability, up to now, of the EPA to speak on this question has contributed to tension between participants that can be avoided once we get that behind us.

Dr. Breen responded saying the decision had been made to do an integrated Phase I and Phase II. Both should be out in 1997. There is a formal peer review process that the agency goes through where a particular panel of individuals are identified to serve as peer reviewers. The input for names of



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people to serve on the panel are solicited by individuals who may well serve as stakeholders. The process where the materials are shared with all of the stakeholders, will not happen until after the peer review process is completed. The current plan is to complete phase I and phase II together. Phase II is almost completed, and both phases are pretty close to being ready to go.

Mr. Jehassi formally ended discussion.